



# News Release

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## **Water quality challenges force closure in part of Mason County shellfish area**

*Sixteen areas in 10 counties listed as 'threatened' because of pollution concerns*

**OLYMPIA** — Polluted water is causing health officials to close a portion of at least one commercial shellfish harvesting area in Puget Sound this year. The North Bay site being partially closed is near Allyn in Mason County.

The Washington State Department of Health has identified 16 other harvest areas as being “threatened” with closure based on increasing pollutants. That’s a slight improvement over the 17 threatened areas listed in 2008.

Each year, the agency reviews water quality and pollution conditions in each of Washington’s 102 classified commercial shellfish growing areas. Areas that don’t meet stringent public health standards must be closed. Other areas with increased pollutant levels are listed as “threatened with closure.” They’re evaluated and watched by the agency and other stakeholders. The “threatened” designation serves as an early warning and helps target pollution control efforts.

“Some very productive shellfish harvesting areas in Puget Sound, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor are meeting the water quality standard, but are on the verge of closure,” said Bob Woolrich, growing area manager for the department. “This year we have to restrict harvest in a small portion of North Bay in Mason County because of water quality issues. Another part of the North Bay area is on our threatened list.”

The threatened shellfish areas for 2009, listed by county, are:

**Clallam County** – Jamestown; **Grays Harbor County** – Grays Harbor, Pacific Coast; **Jefferson County** – Mystery Bay; **Kitsap County** – Dyes Inlet; **Mason County** – Hood Canal 9 (near

Lynch Cove), Oakland Bay, North Bay, Pickering Passage; **Pacific County** – Bay Center, Naselle River; **Pierce County** – Burley Lagoon, Filucy Bay; **Skagit County** – Samish Bay; **Snohomish County** – South Skagit Bay; **Whatcom County** – Drayton Harbor.

“Improvements are being made, and many of them wouldn’t be happening without the good work of the Department of Health and its partners. But we can’t deny the fact that, despite this progress, Puget Sound is still exhibiting signs of trouble,” said David Dicks, executive director of the Puget Sound Partnership, which recently adopted the Action Agenda to restore the Sound. “Fortunately, with the Action Agenda in place, we are now in a position to move forward cleaning up Puget Sound.”

While some areas that were threatened last year are off the list in 2009, some new growing areas have been added to that category this year. Areas new to the “threatened” list in 2009 are Jamestown, Pacific Coast, Hood Canal 9 near Lynch Cove, Oakland Bay, and Samish Bay.

The Washington State Department of Health Office of Shellfish and Water Protection classifies all commercial shellfish harvesting areas in Washington, using national standards. More information regarding [the status of shellfish harvesting areas](#) is available on the Department of Health Web site ([www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/grow.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/grow.htm)). [A map](#) of the 2009 threatened areas is also available online.

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